

NEWS RELEASE

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TWO MORE SENTENCED FOR ROLES IN EAST ST. LOUIS VOTE-BUYING CONSPIRACY

Edward E. McNally, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, announced today the sentencing in United States District Court of two more individuals convicted last June of offenses relating to vote buying in East St. Louis in the 2004 federal election.

“Nothing goes to the heart of America’s democratic traditions more than the sanctity of fair elections,” said McNally. “These sentences send a strong message that the community will not tolerate vote fraud and corruption in Illinois.”

KELVIN ELLIS, age 56, of Fairview Heights, Illinois, was sentenced to a term of 54 months imprisonment, a fine of \$2500, a \$200 special assessment, and a three year term of supervised release to follow his incarceration. In June 2005, ELLIS, was convicted following a 17 day jury trial of one count of conspiring with others to buy votes and one count of aiding and abetting vote buying. According to Assistant United States Attorneys Michael Carr and James Cutchin, who prosecuted the case, evidence adduced at trial showed that ELLIS was the elected Democratic Precinct Committeeman for the 25th Precinct in East St. Louis and that he and certain other Democratic precinct committeemen conspired with each other and with other precinct workers to pay voters for voting in the 2004 election in amounts ranging from \$5 to \$10 per vote. Specifically, the evidence showed that codefendant **CHARLES POWELL, Jr.**, who was the Chairman of the East St. Louis Democratic Party, used three precinct committeemen meetings in October 2004 to instruct East St. Louis’ Democratic precinct committeemen to use money obtained from the St. Clair County Democratic Party to pay voters for voting in the election. The evidence showed that the three races that the conspirators were attempting to influence were the races for President of the United States, Justice of the Illinois Supreme Court, and Chair of the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners. POWELL was also convicted by the same jury of conspiring to buy votes and is scheduled for sentencing on February 13, 2006, in East St. Louis.

During the time frame alleged in the indictment, ELLIS was also the Director of Regulatory Affairs for the City of East St. Louis. ELLIS was terminated from that position in April 5, 2005, after his indictment in this case in March 2005.

Previously, in January 2005, ELLIS was also charged in the Southern District of Illinois in two other cases with income tax evasion, Case No. 05-CR-30010-WDS, and obstruction of justice, Case No. 05-CR-30011-MJR. ELLIS pled guilty in both of these cases following the guilty verdict in the vote buying case. On December 19, 2005, ELLIS was sentenced to a term of 21 months imprisonment in the tax evasion case and is scheduled for sentencing in the obstruction of

justice case on April 7, 2006. The Court ordered that the 54 month sentence imposed in the vote-buying case run concurrently with the 21 month tax evasion sentence.

Also sentenced was **JESSE LEWIS**, age 57, of East St. Louis, Illinois. LEWIS was also convicted by the jury of one count of conspiring to pay voters for voting and one count of aiding and abetting vote buying. LEWIS was sentenced to a term of 15 months imprisonment, a fine of \$200, a \$200 special assessment, and a two year term of supervised release to follow his incarceration. According to Assistant United States Attorneys Carr and Cutchin, evidence adduced at trial showed that LEWIS was the elected Democratic Precinct Committeeman for the 42nd Precinct in East St. Louis and that, after being instructed to do so by POWELL at the Democratic Precinct Committee meetings, he also paid voters for voting in the 2004 election.

Last week two other codefendants were sentenced for their roles in the vote buying scheme. SHEILA THOMAS, age 33, of East St. Louis, who was the Democratic Precinct Committeeman for the 17th Precinct in East St. Louis during the 2004 election, was sentenced to a term 18 months imprisonment, a fine of \$200, a \$200 special assessment, and a two year term of supervised release to follow her incarceration. YVETTE JOHNSON, age 47, of Centreville, Illinois, who was a precinct worker in the ELLIS's 25th Precinct, was sentenced to a term of 2 years probation with a condition that the first five months of that sentence be served as home confinement.

Information for the indictment and convictions was obtained through the cooperative efforts of the United States Attorney's Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the United States Postal Service, the Criminal Division of the Internal Revenue Service, and the Illinois State Police.